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Southern District of Texas**

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THREE MEXICAN NATIONALS SENTENCED IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASE

HOUSTON, TX – United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle and Assistant Attorney General Wan Kim, Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, today announced the prison sentences imposed on three Mexican nationals for smuggling minor girls and young women from Mexico into the United States and using deception, threats of harm, physical force and psychological coercion to compel their service as prostitutes in Houston area bars.

Angel Moreno Salazar, 24, and his brother, Jose Luis Moreno Salazar, 20, and Salvador Fernando Molina Garcia, 37, all of whom pleaded guilty earlier this year, were sentenced today by United States District Judge Vanessa Gilmore to prison terms for their part in this familial conspiracy involved in trafficking young Mexican girls and women and using coercive methods to compel them to engage in prostitution. Jose Luis Moreno Salazar and Salvador Fernando Molina Garcia were each sentenced to the maximum statutory penalty of 60 months in federal prison. Angel Moreno Salazar was sentenced to a prison term of 51 months. All federal prison sentences are without parole. Additionally, each of these men faces deportation upon their release from prison.

These three men were indicted in the fall of 2005, along with Gerardo Salazar, also known as "El Gallo," 40, the alleged leader of the organization, Ivan Salazar, 19, and Juan Carlos Salazar, 21, all of whom are also Mexican nationals. Gerardo Salazar, father of Ivan and Juan Carlos Salazar and an uncle of Angel and Jose Luis Salazar, is a fugitive. Juan Carlos Salazar pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge on February 3, 2006, and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 24, 2006. Ivan Salazar, the last of the five defendants in federal custody charged in this case, is pending trial and **presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.**

The indictment of these defendants is the result of an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other member agencies of the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance ("HTRA") in Houston, Texas, and the Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission (TABC).

At their respective re-arraignment hearings, the men were convicted of being part of an organization that operated between early 2004 through the summer of 2005, to (1) recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide and obtain young Mexican women and girls, and benefitting financially from participating in a venture knowing that force, fraud and coercion would be used to cause the young Mexican women and girls to engage in commercial sex acts, and to (2) entice, harbor, transport, provide and obtain young Mexican women and girls, and benefit financially from participation in a venture knowing that the girls, who had not attained the age of 18 years, would be engaging in a commercial sex act.

At his re-arraignment hearing on February 3, 2006, Jose Luis Moreno Salazar admitted that in 2004 he, along with another, illegally smuggled a then 15 year old juvenile Mexican girl, identified in court as M.R.G., into the United States and compelled her to serve as a prostitute through the use of force, fraud and coercion for the financial benefit of the conspirators knowing she was a minor. Jose Luis Moreno Salazar lured M.R.G. from her family by professing love and claiming she would live with him as his common law wife. The evidence proved that once in Houston, Jose Luis Moreno Salazar housed M.R.G. and other women and girls in apartments leased by members of the organization and transported them to area bars for the purpose of prostitution. Jose Luis and his co-conspirators provided instruction to the women and girls regarding how to service clients and required them to turn over their prostitution proceeds at the end of each day for the benefit of the conspirators. Jose Luis and others threatened the women and girls to create a climate of fear to compel and maintain their service as prostitutes. M.R.G. was subjected to beatings by Jose Luis for perceived infractions. The beatings were committed with a belt, a wire hanger or a cable. For disobedience, M.R.G. was also threatened with a knife and beaten by other co-conspirators at the behest of Jose Luis. M.R.G. was 17 years old when she was rescued by investigating agents in September 2005.

Angel Moreno Salazar, who pleaded guilty on February 6, 2006, also admitted being a member of the organization with his brother and cousin and his involvement in the sex trafficking activity of the conspiracy. He admitted to also serving as a driver for another minor coerced into prostitution, identified in court as M.R.F., transporting her to Houston area bars. He admitted knowing the family organization was using coercion to compel the services of women and girls as prostitutes, including several minors under the age of 18.

Salvador Fernando Molina Garcia pleaded guilty on January 17, 2006. At that hearing he also admitted being a member of the organization and his involvement in the sex trafficking activity.

A warrant remains outstanding for the arrest of Gerardo Salazar. Anyone having information about the whereabouts of Gerardo Salazar, a.k.a. "El Gallo" is urged to contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Houston, Texas, at (713) 693-5000 or their nearest FBI office. A photograph of this fugitive is attached.

Anyone having knowledge of others subjected to similarly described conduct is urged to contact the Houston office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the above number or the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance through the Houston office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at 281-774-4900.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Ruben R. Perez and Joe Magliolo of the United States Attorney's Office of the Southern District of Texas, and Trial Attorneys Lou DeBaca and Jennifer Dominguez of the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division.

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